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Disarmament Commission

371st meeting

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New York

Chair: Ms. Bird ..... (Australia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

Mr. Penaranda (Philippines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, the Philippines.

ASEAN member States congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election to preside over the 2018 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We are confident that your leadership will facilitate the best possible outcome. Madam, you can be assured of our support and constructive participation.

ASEAN stresses the importance of preserving and strengthening the role and purpose of the disarmament machinery, namely, the Conference on Disarmament, the UNDC and the First Committee. In that regard, we welcome last year's successful adoption by consensus of the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We strongly believe that the UNDC, with its universal membership, continues to have a unique role to play in building trust and confidence among Member States on various issues in the disarmament sphere.

With respect to recommendations on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, ASEAN believes that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues can be best addressed through multilateralism and all countries carrying out their obligations responsibly.

We also reaffirm the importance of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones to the existing global non-proliferation regime, and we continue to support the ongoing efforts towards the establishment of such zones, especially in the Middle East. We reiterate our commitment to preserving our region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

Along with the SEANWFZ, last year's adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 7 July, constitutes a vital step towards global nuclear disarmament and complements the existing non-proliferation and global nuclear-weapon-related instruments. It will also make significant contributions towards the shared goal of making our region and the world free of nuclear weapons

At the same time, ASEAN continues to recognize the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, and we call on all States parties to the NPT to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of their existing obligations, particularly those under article VI. Bearing in mind the significance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we join others in urging the annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible in order to realize its entry into force

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ASEAN welcomes the announcement of plans for the inter-Korean summit and the meeting between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the near future, as well as efforts by the Republic of Korea and all concerned parties to reduce tensions and work towards a peaceful resolution of the situation on the Korean peninsula. ASEAN also notes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's reported commitment to denuclearization and its pledge to refrain from further nuclear and missile tests during this period. We reiterate ASEAN's support for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner, and we express hope for a peaceful and amicable resolution to the issue.

ASEAN also emphasizes the importance of the full and effective implementation of the non-proliferation regime, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Here, greater coherence and cooperation is needed among States on intelligence sharing, capacity-building and assistance. Furthermore, industry, academia and civil society have an important contribution to make to realizing an effective non-proliferation regime.

ASEAN looks ahead with optimism to the upcoming second preparatory committee of the NPT, to be held later this month in Geneva. It is the hope of ASEAN that the outcome of the UNDC will contribute to laying the necessary groundwork for the third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee, in 2019, which will be chaired by Malaysia, as well as the 2020 NPT Review Conference. We also look forward to the upcoming United Nations International High-level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, in May 2018, as a practical contribution to the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

ASEAN reiterates its strong commitment to moving the global non-proliferation and disarmament agenda forward, and we call on all Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to demonstrate good faith, promote mutual understanding, enhance trustworthy cooperation and ensure responsible collective actions in striving for a world without nuclear weapons.

ASEAN is convinced that space technology and its applications provide indispensable tools for viable long-term solutions for many of the development challenges, as well as contributing to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With regard to recommendations on practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, ASEAN would like to put forward the following points.

First, ASEAN recognizes that the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes are for the benefit of all humankind. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is of vital importance. In that regard, we should build consensus on norms that encourage the peaceful use of space as a global commons for the benefit of all States. Deeper international collaboration is required, and ASEAN supports efforts to strengthen the governance framework of outer space. A possible avenue for addressing this issue is through an appropriate multilateral framework on the rules of behaviour in outer space. ASEAN notes with appreciation the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, and we reaffirm the importance of TCBMs in fostering mutual trust and reducing the risks of miscommunication.

Secondly, ASEAN welcomes activities and dialogue aimed at deepening understanding on issues pertaining to space security. In particular, ASEAN would like to highlight the contributions made by the series of ASEAN regional forum space security workshops, which have contributed to deliberations on critical issues, including space security threats and hazards, transparency and confidence-building measures for enhancing space security and areas for practical international cooperation in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

Thirdly, ASEAN recognizes that the steadily increasing interest in space brings along a series of challenges that have to be tackled expeditiously. In particular, ASEAN reiterates our concern regarding the issue of space debris. These space objects pose a serious threat to communications and all nations, peoples and industries that rely heavily on their use.

ASEAN encourages States that have not yet done so to consider voluntary implementation of the Space Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. ASEAN also urges the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to continue discussion on measures to mitigate space debris.

Fourthly, ASEAN welcomes the adoption on 4 December 2017 of resolution 72/26, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and resolution 72/27, on the no first placement of weapons in outer space. ASEAN notes that a group of governmental experts (GGE) will be established this year, pursuant to resolution 72/250, to make recommendations on substantial elements of an international, legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We call on the GGE to fulfil its mandate in an open and inclusive manner.

Fifthly and lastly, pragmatic cooperation among all parties is required to ensure that space remains secure and sustainable. ASEAN welcomes the report of the First Committee of 8 November 2017 (A/72/399) on the joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability, under the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space."

ASEAN stands ready to play its part and to further contribute to the discussion on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and issues related to outer space to prevent an arms race — issues that have a significant impact on the future of all humankind.

Ms. Challenger (Antigua and Barbuda): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and the members of your Bureau on assuming your positions in this substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. CARICOM also wishes to express our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, for her work as Chair of the Commission at its 2017 session.

We further extend our congratulations to the Working Group Chairs, our colleagues from Jamaica and Belgium, on their elections. They can be assured of the full support of CARICOM member States as we strive to make this session a success.

CARICOM also aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

CARICOM reaffirms the critical role of the Disarmament Commission, which enjoys universal membership as the sole specialized platform for deliberations on global issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. We urge that no effort be spared as we begin this new three-year cycle to ensure that the Disarmament Commission reaches a positive outcome and submits concrete recommendations to the General Assembly from the work of this session.

Regarding nuclear weapons, this is the first meeting of the Disarmament Commission since the historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons with the goal of leading towards their total elimination. We must remember that our shared objective is to ensure that the world is free of nuclear weapons. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences are clear, and we are all at grave risk as long as these weapons exist. Furthermore, in today's context. in which States are modernizing their nuclear arsenals, the need is dire. Let us build upon our common objectives as we approach the deliberations in Working Group I.

CARICOM States that have not yet signed and/or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are working assiduously to do so and urge all Member States to do the same in order to see its early entry into force. Additionally, CARICOM member States are proud to be within the first densely populated area in the world to be declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, or the Treaty of Tlateloco.

CARICOM would like to recognize the critical role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for its invaluable support to Caribbean countries as we implement disarmament measures in our countries.

We must take advantage of the progress made last year at the Conference on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to push forward with total and complete nuclear disarmament, for the benefit of the world

With regard to the Working Group on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, CARICOM maintains that preventing the weaponization of outer space is a global concern and

stands ready to engage in this discussion. We stand with Member States that consider that the weaponization of space will destroy strategic balance and stability, undermine international and national security, and disrupt existing arms control instruments.

In conclusion, CARICOM eagerly looks forward to constructive debates on these two important agenda items. We also stand ready to work with you, Madam Chair, and other delegations towards achieving consensus outcomes as we work towards advancing total disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Power (United Kingdom): On behalf of the United Kingdom delegation, please allow me to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and the Government of Australia on your election to the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 session. We thank you personally for all you have done so far to advance the work of this body, and in the coming days you may count on the full support of the United Kingdom as you fulfil your duties and important responsibilities.

We thank you and the Deputy High Representative for Disarmament for your thoughtful remarks. We also congratulate the other members of the Commission's Bureau on their elections.

Our collective security and prosperity rely on an effective global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Together, we have constructed a comprehensive set of rules, norms and standards that counter the proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction and their effective means of delivery. Our challenge today is to protect and implement the rules-based system that we have so painstakingly created.

It is deeply concerning that, since the Commission last met, those norms have been flagrantly violated by a pattern of increasingly aggressive behaviour by one member State — Russia. Most recently, the first use of chemical weapons on European soil since the foundation of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and, as an unlawful use of force, a breach of the Charter of the United Nations. Leading members of the international community agree that there is no alternative plausible explanation other than that the Russian State committed this act. Russia's failure to address the straightforward requests of my Government and international community further indicates its culpability. This disrespect for international norms and laws threatens the basis of our advanced democracies, open societies and free economies and should concern every representative in this room. Such hostile activity that does not respect borders places us all at risk.

The United Kingdom embraces its obligations and is engaging fully and openly with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Highly reputable, independent laboratories are being used by the OPCW to confirm the results of our own testing in this investigation.

The United Kingdom, in this episode, wishes to express its gratitude to all of those Member States that have responded to Russia's actions with the largest collective expulsion of undeclared intelligence operatives in history. That action was targeted specifically at the network that Russia uses to conduct such provocative and unlawful behaviour, and it sends a clear message that Russia's actions and continued attempts to flout international law and undermine our values will not be tolerated.

The United Nations, as we meet today, faces a number of alarming continued challenges on the agenda. While the United Kingdom welcomes the planned inter-Korean summit and the prospect of meetings between the leaders of the United States and North Korea, as well as the ongoing efforts of China to achieve denuclearization on the North Korean peninsula, we must continue to send a strong message to the regime in Pyongyang. Though we again welcome Kim Jong Un's pledge to refrain from any further nuclear or missile tests while dialogue continues, we must ensure that North Korea matches its words with concrete actions. We will continue working with our international partners to keep up maximum pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, strictly enforce existing sanctions, urge North Korea to comply with its international obligations and urge for a return to compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The Non-Proliferation Treaty has provided the framework for non-proliferation norms, supporting international security for decades. It is of vital importance to uphold its principles and achievements. The United Kingdom, as a State party to the NPT and co-depositary, and a responsible nuclear-weapon State, takes our own responsibilities very seriously. We remain committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We have already disarmed

further than any other nuclear-weapon State, down to a minimum and credible deterrent. We have long been clear that we would consider using our nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including in defence of our NATO allies.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom has committed not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the NPT that remains in full compliance with its non-proliferation obligations. However, we have reserved the right to review that assurance if the future threat of other weapons of mass destruction by such States makes it necessary.

The NPT was built by consensus, resulting in tangible benefits to all its signatories. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons stands in stark contrast to that. It offers no solutions to the very complex security challenges that we currently face, or to the significant technical challenges of nuclear disarmament, nor would we accept that the Treaty reflects or creates any international norm. The United Kingdom will not become party to that Treaty. We continue to believe that the best way to achieve our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach and supported by strict international controls.

Effective disarmament in which all parties can be confident involves processes beyond just arms reductions. For example, coalitions of nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States continue to make progress on nuclear-disarmament verification. That remains an important step towards establishing and maintaining the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. Over 20 non-nuclear-weapon States and three nuclear-weapon States can work together to build on the results of the first phase of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. The Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership initiative of Norway, Sweden, the United States and the United Kingdom can build on the first-ever multilateral disarmament verification exercise, Operation Letterpress, carried out in October last year. Finally, the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification starts next month. We express particular thanks to Norway for initiating that work.

Looking more broadly across the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, we can also continue to support the universalization and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and observe our Treaty obligations. We thank Canada for its efforts on the session of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group next month so that we can revitalize efforts towards a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. We could also encourage the International Atomic Energy Agency member States that have not done so to ratify the comprehensive safeguards agreement and the additional protocols. Their implementation provides the strongest assurance to the international community that all nuclear material remains in peaceful activities.

Finally, we can continue efforts to sign the Protocol to the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty as soon as possible and pursue the objective of achieving a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The United Kingdom firmly believes that the nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute greatly to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and enhancing regional and international security. Those examples of cooperation can help take us closer toour shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons and of limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Turning to space, those capabilities have long been important tools for maintaining international peace and security, and they remain so today. Therefore, we welcome the establishment of the new Working Group on Transparency- and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities to devise practical recommendations for the implementation of transparency- and confidence-building measures in outer space activities (TCBMs), in accordance with the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189) in 2013.

We believe that the need for such TCBMs has increased since the Group of Governmental Experts report was published. The activities of States in space and rapid developments in space commerce are throwing new opportunities and challenges our way. Proposals for large constellations of satellites offer the prospect of useful new services for communication and Earth observation, including to underserved segments of the globe. At the same, inserting such large quantities of satellites into orbit is likely to increase the space debris population.

New missions using new technologies to remove debris and carry out orbiting servicing and manufacturing could contribute to making life better on Earth and protecting the space environment. Such technologies include the ability to rendezvous with other space objects and grapple, grab, capture and move them. Many countries have expressed concern about possible hostile uses of that technology. Ensuring that we use such technologies to deliver a global good of debris removal, but also avoiding tensions are major collective responsibilities for States. We hope that those practical recommendations may be implemented in a manner that enables their deployment.

Since 2010, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has been working to develop guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts, on which the Committee will base its work, noted that the implementation of those guidelines will be important as they will have characteristics similar to those of the TCBMs. Some of them could be considered as potential TCBMs, while others could provide the technical basis for the implementation of certain TCBMs proposed by the Group of Governmental Experts.

We call on all those member States involved in the negotiations to work hard to ensure that the draft United Nations guidelines will be finalized in June. They would be an important contribution to the safety, security and stability of outer space activity and provide an important input into the Disarmament Commission's deliberations on TCBMs. We look forward to contributing to our discussions and making specific proposals on the development of practical recommendations during the next three years.

The United Kingdom looks forward to working with you, Madam Chair, the Working Group Chairs and the members of the Commission in addressing the issues before us in this new three-year cycle in the interest of our collective security and stability.

Mr. Fachinotti (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on assuming the chairmanship of Disarmament Commission and to assure you of our full support.

The international security situation is today more unstable than it has been since the end of the Cold War. In a multipolar and fragmented world, the trend is to rearm, rather than to further disarm. We are witnessing ongoing violations of the norms against chemical weapons, which is representative of that concerning trend. Switzerland firmly condemns such violations of international law and calls for international cooperation in order to establish the facts and ensure accountability for such actions. Those are very disconcerting developments. We must resist any erosion of existing norms and prevent any backtracking on obligations. Preserving and strengthening the rules-based international order contributes to the security of all and is a priority for Switzerland.

In that context, it is necessary to relaunch disarmament efforts and to revitalize the disarmament machinery, which includes the Disarmament Commission, in order to establish a climate of trust and prevent conflicts. Switzerland particularly welcomes the recent progress made by the Commission. Following the adoption of the Commission's report (A/73/42), which contains recommendations on one of the items on last year's agenda, the Commission is in a strong position to achieve concrete results during the 2018-2020 cycle.

The first topic on the agenda is nuclear disarmament. Establishing a secure world free of nuclear weapons is a huge task. Switzerland is under no illusion that achieving that objective will not be easy. However, we should tirelessly pursue it. The disastrous humanitarian consequences of the use of a nuclear weapon should encourage us to redouble our disarmament efforts. For the survival of humankind, it is important that nuclear weapons never again be used under any circumstances. Several developments have led to the re-emergence of nuclear-weapon-related threats and concerns. First and foremost, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions with regard to its nuclear programme and to cease all development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Switzerland is convinced that apart from imposing sanctions and political pressure, it is crucial to maintain a dialogue aimed at finding a diplomatic solution. In that regard, we welcome the developing dialogue between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We encourage its continuation and the efforts to expand it to other actors. Switzerland is ready to facilitate such discussions if the parties so wish. The current challenges include not only the situation on the Korean peninsula but modernization that exceeds security aspects, nuclear arsenals and the development of new weapons, all of which are a source

of concern to my country. We must prevent a new nuclear arms race. We need more dialogue rather than more weapons. We should also oppose any lowering of the threshold for nuclear tests and ensure that recourse to nuclear weapons is even more unthinkable. In the current context, the Disarmament Commission could develop a series of recommendations that contain a range of measures to reduce the nuclear threat.

The second agenda item concerns the preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. Outer space is increasingly subject to intensive and diversified use. In recent years, it has become indispensable to interconnected infrastructure. Civilian as well as military satellite applications are used throughout the world. The development of space applications and the growing number of actors in that field increase the strategic importance of space and raise the issue of security in outer space and the long-term viability of space systems.

Transparency in outer space activities and trust among States play a key role. In that regard, the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189) continues to be the point of reference. The report contains specific proposals, on which we must continue to work, as well as criteria that all transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space should meet.

We hope that the Commission will be able to agree on concrete outcomes to establish a climate of trust among States, strengthening international security and stability. It will be essential to explore in depth the various possible options in order to achieve such an outcome.

We cannot ignore the difficult geopolitical context. It is precisely in such a situation that dialogue and multilateral action are necessary. After years of stalemate, Member States have demonstrated that they can agree on fulfilling the mandate of the Disarmament Commission. The Commission is therefore in a favourable position to obtain concrete results on the two crucial agenda items. In addition, we must highlight the fact that the Disarmament Commission has also managed to establish understanding for substantive work. Let us benefit from the positive momentum and make the most of this cycle of the Disarmament Commission. It is an essential instrument for achieving a more stable and peaceful world.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Ivorian delegation, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the current session, which starts the new 2018-2020 triennial cycle of the work of our Commission. We are convinced that your experience and leadership will be invaluable assets for the conduct and success of our work.

I would also like to express my gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, and to her team, whose tireless efforts made it possible to make progress at last year's substantive session and for us to agree on recommendations for conventional weapons for the first time since 1999.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

The international disarmament architecture and the non-proliferation regime have been severely weakened in recent years. The conduct of nuclear tests and the launching of long-range ballistic missiles by some States, as well as the race to acquire new kinds of weapons, such as lethal autonomous weapon systems, cyberweapons and other weapons of mass destruction plunge us back into the gloomy atmosphere of the cold war. Conventional arms sales have risen, fuelling an increase in terrorism and conflict of all kinds over the past decade and causing many casualties every year. In the same way, outer space is coveted to the point where its militarization can no longer be excluded. In that regard, my delegation would like to welcome the inclusion of the use of outer space on the agenda of this session.

Our common goal of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is threatened. The continuation of the nuclear programme by the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which reached its peak on 2 September 2017, despite the many United Nations sanctions, calls for the necessary entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay. To that end, my delegation calls on States to shoulder their responsibilities, in particular the annex 2 States, whose

ratification determine the Treaty's entry into force, to do so without delay.

Côte d'Ivoire also calls on all States to scrupulously respect the moratorium on nuclear tests and to refrain from any act contrary to the spirit and letter of the CTBT. We urge them to fully implement the relevant provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to accede to the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with a view to its implementation in order to prevent the use of such weapons having immeasurable consequences for our planet. Moreover, we hope that the Disarmament Commission can at last make recommendations to the General Assembly on the issue after 18 years of stagnation.

More than 50 years after the establishment of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, it is now necessary to ensure that the politics for the conquest of space seen in recent years do not lead to the militarization of outer space. It is no secret that for several decades space has become a major strategic issue. It is an inseparable part of military activities. In that context, this session provides the Commission with the opportunity to recommend appropriate measures to the General Assembly in terms of developing a binding legal instrument or, failing that, an international code of conduct to prevent an arms race in outer space.

My delegation calls on Member States to work to promote the peaceful use of outer space, particularly in the fields of communication, agriculture and transport. It also advocates the establishment of transparency- and confidence-building measures to strengthen cooperation among States and to reduce the potential threats associated with its use.

Contrary to popular belief, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction still continues. Despite the significant results achieved by the verification mechanism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons with the destruction to date of 95 per cent of chemical weapons, the events in Salisbury, England, in March and the chemical attacks attributed to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant clearly demonstrate that there is still a threat from such weapons. That is why we are deeply concerned about the inertia seen at the recent Review Conferences of States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and many other agreements.

Experts say that small arms and light weapons kill more than 700,000 people every year and fuel organized crime, cross-border crime and drug trafficking, as well as trafficking of all kinds. As can be seen, that figure shows the extent of the damage caused to humanity by such weapons. The experience of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Côte d'Ivoire shows that, with political will and the help of international partners, it is possible to effectively combat the illicit trafficking and trade in small arms and light weapons. In that regard, my country has made considerable progress in ammunition management through its national commission on small arms and light weapons.

My delegation welcomes the Commission's recommendations on small arms and light weapons made during the 2017 session. We are confident about the conclusions of the upcoming United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, planned for June. We congratulate France, which will preside over that important meeting, on the quality of the preparatory work for the Conference.

Notwithstanding the real obstacles that our negotiations could face, we must remain optimistic about the future. It is therefore still not too late to overcome our differences and to restore trust among us in order to reach satisfactory and common solutions acceptable to all. Only in that way can we ensure that multilateralism prevails in the United Nations so as to make disarmament a reality.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election to guide the work of the Disarmament Commission (UNDC), together with the Bureau members. I would like to commend all your work in preparation for this substantive session, and I wish you every success in the days ahead.

This year's substantive session marks the beginning of a new triennial cycle as a new part of our collective effort to advance the global disarmament and arms control norms, ultimately strengthening international peace and security. It also has the potential to mark a new era in the work of the UNDC as a continuation

of last year's success when the Commission finally managed to achieve a long-awaited result.

This year's session deals with two important and well-chosen topics. We particularly welcome the inclusion of the item on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities on the agenda. By expanding the scope of its work beyond the fields of nuclear and conventional weapons, the Disarmament Commission has demonstrated its much-needed flexibility and readiness to respond appropriately to new challenges. We hope that the discussion on both topics will be constructive and fruitful.

According to the most recent statistics, nine countries have orbital launch capability and more than 70 have put their satellites into space. However, outer space should be of interest to and the domain of us all. The fact that 2017 saw the second-highest number of orbital launch attempts of any year this century underscores the growing importance of space. Keeping it free of conflict is in the utmost interest of humanity.

Bearing in mind the various approaches and well-known differences in the field of nuclear disarmament, a pragmatic and more focused exchange of views should benefit our goal of nuclear risk reduction. There are many ways to achieve that, not all of which include big new instruments and treaties. The absence of common ground for consensual agreement on parts of the nuclear disarmament field must not derail our efforts in other segments, where a high degree of common understanding, as well as room to move forward, exists. The implementation of existing instruments and resolutions — and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is a good example — remains as crucial as ever.

In addition, we must remain aware of the utmost importance of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and, through meticulous preparations, try to ensure its good outcome.

We should never lose sight of the fact that the Disarmament Commission is the only subsidiary body of the General Assembly with universal membership, and that we have agreed to make every effort to ensure that, to the extent possible, decisions on substantive issues are adopted by consensus. That provides the Commission with additional authority and consequent responsibility within the scope of the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery.

A new item on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission — that on outer space — demonstrates that we can expand the range of our deliberations as new circumstances and priorities may require. A substantive debate and a good outcome this year could set an example for the future and lead us to considering other possible relevant agenda items in a long-term perspective.

The field of disarmament deserves our full attention. The deteriorating international security environment and increasing international concerns about weapons of mass destruction, as well as profound and rapid advancements in cutting-edge technology, underscore the importance of our comprehensive approach, which should keep pace with new trends.

I recall that in 2014, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 69/77, in which, inter alia, it encourages the Disarmament Commission to invite, as appropriate, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to prepare background papers on the items on its agenda. Such encouragement has been repeated in three consecutive resolutions on the reports of the Disarmament Commission, namely, resolutions 70/68, 71/82 and 72/66. We should remain mindful of that important paragraph, especially against the background of the new scientific and technological innovations applicable to disarmament, which present not only a myriad of opportunities but also serious threats. In that regard, a deeper understanding of the new trends and developments in the various areas of disarmament is of the utmost importance. UNIDIR could play a useful role in providing our work with research-based data and knowledge.

This year, we must fully focus on two items on our agenda. However, that should not limit the deliberative scope of our long-term planning. The potentially catastrophic nexus between cyber weapons and weapons of mass destruction or autonomous lethal weapons systems are topics that more than merit in-depth discussion in future.

This session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission is an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to disarmament as an essential pillar of international peace and security. The Commission's accomplishment in 2017 was an important stepping stone for the United Nations disarmament machinery, providing it with much-needed relevance fit for the

twenty-first century. We should spare no effort to stay on this positive course, and we are looking forward to a focused and results-oriented discussion.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate you, Madam Chair, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to direct the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this year's session. You can count on the full cooperation of my delegation.

Venezuela associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

The Disarmament Commission is beginning this new cycle of activities in the midst of a turbulent international situation that is reflected in the increase in tensions in various regions of the world, as a result of unilateralism and war-mongering rhetoric, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Interventionism is promoted illegally and shamelessly, and countries are threatened with the use of force and their destruction. Despite these negative trends, the international community must continue its strong commitment to respecting international law, in particular the purposes and principles of the Charter, convinced that its full observance is a fundamental element in the maintenance of international peace and security. Venezuela attaches particular importance to the role of the Disarmament Commission in making recommendations on the issues under its consideration, bearing in mind its contribution to multilateral disarmament diplomacy.

The existence of approximately 15,000 nuclear weapons continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security — a situation that requires the adoption of multilateral measures and agreements aimed at the total elimination of such weapons. In this regard, we are concerned that, despite repeated calls for the suppression of this category of weapons of mass destruction, the nuclear-weapon States are continuing their programmes for the development and improvement of such weapons. In addition, we cannot overlook the fact that those States have restated their military doctrines to include the possible use of nuclear weapons, even broadening their scope in a dangerous manner. We reject such approaches and call on those countries to work resolutely to negotiate agreements and measures aimed at the reduction and total elimination of their arsenals, in accordance with their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The threat or use of nuclear weapons constitutes a violation of international law and a crime against humanity. It is unacceptable that humankind should be exposed to destruction as a result of their use. Faced with the dangers posed by this category of weapons of mass destruction and pending their total elimination, we insist on the need for the adoption of an international agreement on negative security assurances through which the nuclear-weapon States would undertake not to use such systems against non-nuclear-weapon States.

The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last year undoubtedly represents a valuable contribution to the cause of disarmament. For the first time, the international community has at its disposal an international instrument that declares the illegal and immoral nature of nuclear weapons, a fact that has clear political implications for nuclear-disarmament efforts. In this regard, we wish to stress that on Tuesday, 27 March, Venezuela deposited with the Secretary-General its instrument of ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which makes us a State party to that international agreement and reaffirms our commitment to the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation for the benefit of international peace and security.

While resolutely promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, Venezuela calls for the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes with a view to promoting the development and technological independence of developing countries. In this regard, we reject the attempts of those who, based on political calculations, seek to curtail the sovereign right of States to promote nuclear energy for peace and development.

The possible outbreak of an arms race in outer space remains a cause for alarm because of its negative implications for international peace and security. The discussion that we will hold over the next three years on the formulation of recommendations on confidence-building measures in this area is a positive aspect of the treatment of this topic and its contribution to the negotiation of far-reaching measures derived from an international treaty banning the deployment of weapons systems in outer space. Accordingly, we believe that the debate on the topic of confidence-building measures in outer space does not replace the central objective of moving towards the negotiation of an

international legal instrument outlawing the placement of weapons in outer space. That is why Venezuela welcomed resolutions 72/27 and 72/250, adopted by the General Assembly during its seventy-second session, entitled, respectively, "No first placement of weapons in outer space" and "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space", whose texts reaffirm the importance and urgency of achieving the objective of preventing an arms race in outer space and the readiness of States to contribute to the achievement of that common objective.

In this context, we encourage the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to exercise its full competence as a negotiating body for multilateral disarmament agreements and measures in the pursuit of an international legal instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects that complies with the principles of equity, viability and verification. In this regard, we appreciate the initiative of China and Russia on a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer-space objects, presented at the CD in 2008 and whose updated version was presented in 2014. Fifty years after the adoption of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, Venezuela considers outer space to be the common heritage of humankind, which should ensure balanced access for all nations to its use, based on international cooperation in such areas as scientific research and technology transfer.

Finally, our country, within the framework of Bolivarian diplomacy for peace, reaffirms its full commitment to multilateral disarmament diplomacy, convinced of the need for the international community to work together towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, full compliance with the principles of the Charter and effective compliance with non-proliferation treaties — all in the interests of strengthening international peace and security. We trust that under your leadership, Madam Chair, the Disarmament Commission will be able to contribute to the achievement of these objectives, within the framework of the powers assigned to this body.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate the representative of Australia on assuming the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 session. We have no doubt that the expertise and diplomatic effectiveness she has shown will allow us to achieve a positive result on the issues that we will take up during the session. We assure you, Madam Chair, and the Bureau of our delegation's support for your efforts aimed at ensuring the success of the work of this session. I would also like to thank the delegation of Argentina for its wise leadership during the previous session of the Disarmament Commission. My country's delegation would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the delegation of Jamaica on its chairmanship of the Working Group on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and the delegation of Belgium on its chairmanship of the Working Group on outer space.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Group of Arab States (see A/CN.10/PV.369) and the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

Iraq has set out its position with respect to disarmament and non-proliferation issues through article 9, paragraph (e), of its Constitution, which states that

> "The Iraqi Government shall respect and implement Iraq's international obligations regarding the non-proliferation, non-development, non-production, and non-use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and shall prohibit associated equipment, materiel, technologies, and delivery systems for use in the development, manufacture, production, and use of such weapons."

Iraq underscores the essential role that the United Nations Disarmament Commission plays as a multilateral deliberative body in the area of disarmament within the United Nations. My country's delegation welcomes the agreement that was reached in April by the Commission with regard to recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of convention weapons. We hope that agreement will rejuvenate this central body of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

My Government is aware that promoting the universality of all conventions and treaties pertaining to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as universal respect for those instruments without discrimination and the complete elimination of such weapons, is an essential element of providing the international community with a genuine

guarantee as to limiting the use of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of their use. That will also contribute to promoting and maintaining international peace and security and ensure that we provide a safe and healthy future for succeeding generations. In that context, my delegation voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted in July 2017. Bearing that in mind, the delegation of Iraq is convinced that the adoption of that Treaty is the outcome of long-standing and constant efforts by Member States over the past 20 years.

Iraq reiterates its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones all around the world, which is an essential step in eliminating nuclear weapons. We call for the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which extended the NPT, as well as the Action Plan of the final document of 2010 NPT Review Conference. The resolution is an essential component in that regard.

Iraq is disappointed at the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, which was not able to adopt a final document. That poses a major challenge, especially at this critical juncture in world affairs. It could certainly have a negative impact on the Treaty and its credibility.

We must demonstrate greater flexibility and political determination to ensure that the work of the 2020 Review Conference is a success, so as to produce results that meet the concerns of all Member States. With that in mind, Iraq would like to underscore the importance of making every effort to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, especially as that goal is the fourth pillar of the NPT. The creation of such a zone would undoubtedly contribute to strengthening efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and to promoting regional and international peace and security.

Iraq believes that the Israeli entity must disarm and rid itself of its nuclear weapons, sign the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and submit its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That is imperative and urgent if we are to achieve the establishment of such a nuclear-weapon-free zone. My delegation takes this opportunity to underscore the inalienable right of States, especially developing States, to develop, produce and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in order to achieve economic growth without any discrimination or obstacles, on condition that such activities are subject to the monitoring of the IAEA and to the various conditions set forth in the non-proliferation system.

The Government of Iraq, as a facilitator of the implementation of article XIV of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, believes that the earliest possible ratification of the Treaty by the eight parties listed in annex 2 to the Treaty is essential for it to enter into force as a legally binding instrument, which could contribute to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. In addition, the ratification of the Treaty by one of the remaining eight parties — namely, the Israeli entity — is of concern to the international community and to the Middle East in particular. That would be a step in the right direction towards creating a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which, as we know, is a hotbed of tension. Significant wisdom is needed to address this issue. . We therefore demand that the Israeli entity adopt and ratify the relevant international and legal instruments so as to eliminate tensions in the region, especially given that all other parties in the Middle East have ratified the first relevant instrument, namely, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The evolving nature of the threat caused by the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery to non-State actors and the very rapid progress in science and technology are major challenges and concerns for all States. In that context, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is the appropriate international instrument on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems to non-State actors. The Council reaffirmed the relevance of that resolution in its resolution 2325 (2016), following an exhaustive review of its implementation by the 1540 Committee. The objectives of the resolution and its implementation can be achieved through more vigorous efforts and international cooperation.

My Government expresses its concern with regard to the possibility of the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups. We reiterate the importance of cooperation among all States to ensure that we prevent non-State actors from gaining access to those weapons. Nuclear terrorism is one of the greatest challenges that the international community will have to face, which is why we need to step up efforts aimed

at achieving nuclear security so as to make sure that terrorist groups and other non-authorized parties do not have access to nuclear material. We also call on all parties to put in place effective security measures to protect the nuclear facilities and materials they possess and prevent all non-governmental groups from having access to or acquiring such weapons and technologies.

Iraq is aware of the importance and status of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the sole multilateral specialized deliberative body within the United Nations disarmament machinery. In that context, we welcome the decision adopted by the Conference on Disarmament aimed at establishing a subsidiary body to deal with the various items before the Conference. We hope that, through its subsidiary bodies, the Conference can develop and implement a plan of action that takes into account the concerns of Member States with respect to outer space. Like all Member States, Iraq is convinced that outer space is our common heritage and that its militarization will lead to an alarming arms race. We need to prevent that from happening. The international community must address the possibility of adopting an international instrument to prevent the militarization of outer space so that it is not used in a way that could lead to devastating consequences for humankind.

In conclusion, we are ready to cooperate with you, Madam Chair, and the members of the Bureau to find the best ways and means of achieving the goals for which the Disarmament Commission was established. You can count on our support.

Ms. Cerrato (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation congratulates you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 substantive session. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We express our appreciation to the delegation of Argentina for its excellent work as Chair of the Disarmament Commission last year. Honduras also wishes you, Madam Chair, and the Bureau, success in discharging your responsibilities and pledges its full cooperation.

Honduras aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

My delegation underscores the importance of the Disarmament Commission as a specialized body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues to produce concrete recommendations in that area.

Honduras considers the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to be a fundamental instrument and advocates the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument. Consistent with the provisions of the Instrument, the National Congress of Honduras is in the process of adopting a law on weapons possession to ensure that these objectives are achieved. We also welcome the establishment of Central America as a cluster-munitions-free zone, which was declared at the fifth meeting of the States parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in 2014.

From the perspective of my delegation, disarmament should be addressed in a focused manner, as it is directly linked to the maintenance of international peace and security, with direct impact on the programmes and activities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Nuclear disarmament must be achieved in a general and complete manner so as to safeguard the future of succeeding generations and prevent it from ending in catastrophe. My country is proud to be part of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, which was established under the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which recently celebrated 51 years of existence. Latin America's traditional pacifist aspirations determine the inescapable need for nuclear energy to be used in the region for peaceful purposes and for the economic and social development of its peoples. Honduras also hopes that the nuclear-weapon-free-zone regimes will continue to evolve in a positive direction and that they will be strengthened in other regions under treaties already agreed upon.

The General Assembly decided to declare 26 September the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The delegation of Honduras calls on Member States, the United Nations system, academia and civil society to continue commemorating the day and mobilize international efforts to achieve the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, efforts must be made to adopt other measures and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons, considering that in the past 20 years there have been important achievements, such as the moratorium

on testing and the establishment of an International Monitoring System, culminating on 7 July 2017 with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Honduras actively participated in its adoption and looks forward to its early entry into force.

Spending on weapons takes away crucial resources that could contribute to achieving Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Betting on peace while arming oneself is still immoral. We wish to make a heartfelt and respectful appeal to weapons-producing countries to establish moratoriums on their weapons programmes. Moreover, like other States, Honduras advocates the non-militarization of outer space, which is the common heritage of humankind.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its commitment to the success of the Disarmament Commission. We hope that concrete recommendations will be made to the General Assembly at the end of this cycle and that they will be duly implemented.

Ms. Andrieu (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Madam Chair, on behalf of France, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its new session. You can count on the full support of the French delegation.

This new three-year cycle of the Disarmament Commission is opening in an increasingly uncertain and complex strategic context. Last year was unfortunately marked by the persistence of many challenges to our security and to the principles and rules on which it is based and which guide our work. The proliferation of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, along with the risk of their use by States or terrorist groups, continue to constitute very real dangers. The non-proliferation regime is now being dangerously tested: it has not been spared either in the Middle East or in Asia, with the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and Da'esh, and the continuation of destabilizing nuclear and ballistic activities. And that has now occurred on European territory, where one of our closest allies has been outrageously struck. France, together with the rest of the countries of the European Union, condemned that attack on European soil in the strongest terms. We agree with the British analysis that it is highly probable that the Russian Federation is responsible for that act.

Similarly, North Korea's sixth nuclear test, last September — at least 10 times more powerful than the previous one — and the launch of ballistic missiles, including intercontinental missile launches, have changed the nature of the threat we face. We must remain united and determined to work for the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic programmes, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. In that regard, it is essential that North Korea's recent signalling as to the denuclearization of the peninsula be accompanied by concrete actions on the part of Pyongyang with a view to sincere negotiations.

But that dangerous and irrevocable observation does not stop there. Conventional weapons continue to represent a major security challenge for all regions of the world, whether affected by conflict or not. The past year has shown that international efforts in the conventional field now need to better integrate the risk of acquisition and use of conventional weapons by terrorist groups. Like other countries, France has had tragic experience in that regard. The illegal trade in small arms and light weapons constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. Those weapons produce by far the most casualties throughout the world. They fuel armed conflict, organized crime and terrorism. The international community as a whole must commit itself to combating trafficking in those weapons and their ammunition. Finally, let us not forget that, while we increasingly rely on space applications, the space environment is continually deteriorating and now faces many challenges, which we can no longer ignore.

Faced with all those challenges, it is more important than ever to restore and preserve the coherence and cooperative aspect of our efforts. In the current climate, we must all, particularly the disarmament community, commit to engaging at the bilateral, regional and international levels. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, adopted in 2015, illustrated the fact that a proactive approach on the part of the international community could lead to pragmatic solutions to proliferation crises. France reiterates its firm commitment to the Plan's preservation and implementation by all parties. France also calls on Iran to respect all the provisions of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

The proliferation of missiles and ballistic technologies, as well as assistance given to State and non-State entities, is particularly destabilizing and must stop. Closer to home, last year's agreement here

on conventional-arms-control recommendations also illustrates our ability to get along. That must be nurtured and safeguarded. Renewing dialogue is an essential precondition to the credibility of our shared will to build a better world for present and future generations.

In that context, it is our responsibility to unequivocally reaffirm the authority of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the review cycle of which we hope will achieve consensus in 2020, which is why we reject in the strongest terms all attempts to weaken the Treaty. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons does just that; it undermines the international non-proliferation regime by running counter to the NPT. It also weakens the International Atomic Energy Agency, as it does not include the highest standards of verification, including the additional protocol, the universalization of which we support.

I hope that this year will provide us with the greatest possible opportunity to promote coherence among the various elements of the disarmament machinery by strengthening all possible synergies. In that respect, France will be fully involved in the upcoming opportunities, namely, the third Review Conference of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next June and which France will the honour to preside over, as well as the next Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the second Preparatory Committee session of which will be held in May.

I shall now touch upon our pragmatic, progressive and realistic vision of nuclear disarmament. The irreversible dismantling of our nuclear test site, facilities for the production of fissile materials for weapon purposes and the land component of our nuclear deterrence are all testament to the seriousness and scope of French commitments. Disarmament cannot be decreed; rather, it is built by taking into account all the factors that affect strategic stability. We will therefore monitor the steps necessary for disarmament, such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and launching negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices.

We will continue our involvement in the work on the verification of nuclear disarmament through the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the Group of Governmental Experts, which builds trust among nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States to foster a progressive and credible approach to disarmament. France will continue to encourage its Russian and American partners to pursue the reduction of their arsenals and to preserve arms-control instruments, notably the New START Treaty.

Moreover, France cannot accept that the use of chemical weapons by State or non-State actors remain unpunished. The Syrian conflict has, tragically, been the main arena for such behaviour. Further examples include the assassination of the North Korean leader's brother-in-law in Malaysia last year and the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal and his daughter last month in the United Kingdom. Faced with the intolerable risk of de facto impunity, France took the initiative to launch the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons in Paris in January. The Partnership will support the efforts of dedicated forums to safeguard the chemical non-proliferation regime, for which we are responsible. We want all those who might consider the use of chemical weapons in future to know that there will be consequences for their actions.

We cannot ignore the increasing risks to the space environment, in addition to the proliferation of space debris, potential collisions and interference during operations, as well as certain intentional acts that may affect the safety and security of objects in space. In the light of those major challenges, our priority must be to yet again pragmatically ensure the viability and security of space activities. The launch of discussion in this forum, on the basis of the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts, gives us an opportunity to do so. We will be involved in the discussions over the coming weeks to consider the practical implementation of current confidence-building and transparency measures and their possible redoubling.

I conclude by reiterating France's support for the work of the Disarmament Commission and for constructive, pragmatic and realistic disarmament. The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the fight against the trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the strengthening of confidence and transparency in outer space are just a few of the

many issues and challenges that should remind us of our responsibilities.

Mr. Penaranda (Philippines): The Philippines assures you, Madam Chair, of its full cooperation towards achieving a successful session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We welcome the previous session's consensus outcome document on conventional weapons. We share the hope of replicating that success in a more challenging environment.

The global community must agree on concrete recommendations on the two items on our agenda — nuclear disarmament and outer space. On the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), those recommendations should contribute to breaking the existing deadlock and therefore to the success of the 2020 Review Conference. A successful Review Conference will strengthen the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Agreements and, more important, the implementation of those agreements, will also help to avert miscalculations in tense situations or when weapons of mass destruction get into the hands of terrorists. Our collective response must therefore keep pace with the speed of developments on nuclear weapons.

The Philippines remains strongly committed to maintaining international and regional peace and stability, although never at the expense of freedom and sovereignty, as well as to promoting a nuclear-weapon-free world and the safety of Filipinos abroad from the use of weapons of mass destruction. We remain committed to preserving the gains of the 2010 NPT Review Conference through the implementation of the agreements in the 2010 outcome document and, with more vigour, the 64-point Action Plan, as the international community prepares for the 2020 Review Conference.

To achieve the objectives of the NPT, we should work hard for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Philippines adheres to, and continues to advocate for, the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in implementing the NPT. Without transparency and verifiability, it is impossible to foster trust, which alone ensures the attainment of NPT goals.

The Philippines has taken action in line with international commitments on non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Philippine Congress passed the Strategic Trade Management Act to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by closely managing trade in strategic goods. Universalization is key to effectively implementing all treaties and agreement on disarmament and the non-proliferation of all weapons — from conventional to nuclear.

The Philippines welcomes the positive outcome of the first Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. The Preparatory Committee carried some issues forward and revealed new opportunities for advancing the agenda throughout the new review cycle. The Philippines emphasizes that the single major development between the first and second NPT Preparatory Committees for the 2020 Review Conference is the negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. As the first multilateral legally binding instrument for nuclear disarmament, we see the Treaty as complementary to the NPT and essential to achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The NPT continues to provide a foundation, while the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the capstone.

The Philippines has consistently called for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner. The Philippines has been supportive of creating conditions that encourage the resumption of dialogue among the parties concerned. We are encouraged by the readiness of the United States and North Korea to discuss the terms of a peaceful resolution.

On the issue of outer space, the Philippines aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Philippine policy adheres to the principle that taking the arms race into outer space undoes all of the efforts made to stop their spread and the threat of their use on the ground. The Philippines voted in favour of resolutions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the no-first-placement of weapons in outer space in the First Committee and subsequently voted to adopt resolutions 72/26 and 72/27, on those topics, at the General Assembly plenary meeting held on 4 December 2017 (see A/72/PV.62).

The task of thrashing out the critical issues in the next three weeks of the United Nations Disarmament Commission appears Herculean. It is not. The difficulty will be easily overcome by the sincerity of our collective endeavour. It depends entirely upon the participants. There are no external obstacles to success.

Mr. Amaral (Portugal): On behalf of Portugal, I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the two Working Groups and wish them success in their endeavours.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to make complementary comments in its national capacity.

Portugal strongly believes that multilateralism based on universal rules and values is the most effective way to address our common security challenges, manage shared disarmament responsibilities and devise collective non-proliferation initiatives. We therefore need a strong United Nations as the key actor of effective multilateralism, the main agent of multilateral cooperation and a promoter of peace and security.

Portugal remains deeply committed to nuclear disarmament. The well-documented catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons should serve to reinforce our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. That is a moral imperative. My country shares some of the concerns and frustrations about the lack of concrete steps on nuclear disarmament, which led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. However, in our view, a process for the gradual reduction of nuclear weapons that takes into account legitimate national and international security concerns continues to be the best approach to ensure sustainable progress in multilateral disarmament negotiations.

That inclusive step-by-step approach has been driving progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons since the Cold War. Nevertheless, the gains made over the past decades may be at risk, as we are witnessing a rise in global and regional tensions and growing signs of a new arms race in both strategic and conventional weapons. We urgently need to reverse those trends and create the conditions necessary for further nuclear-weapons reductions. Confidence and trust among nuclear-weapons States must be rebuilt, as they have special responsibilities and a very real obligation under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to undertake major reductions in nuclear arsenals.

Portugal considers the Non-Proliferation Treaty to be the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and an important element in the future development of nuclear energy's peaceful applications. We will undertake every effort to achieve a substantial outcome at the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

In 2015, Portugal welcomed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme. The deal has been serving its purpose. Therefore, Portugal strongly encourages its implementation by all parties. We are also convinced of the urgent need to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and achieve progress on nuclear-disarmament verification.

The six nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were a very serious challenge to the global non-proliferation regime. Those tests serve to underline the crucial importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its verification regime and remind us all of the urgency of its early entry into force.

The international community must continue to seek the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We must remain seized of the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, guided by the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Portugal considers it essential to preserve a safe and secure space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis. The rapid growth in human space activity and the diversity of space operators make it necessary to ensure the sustainable use of outer space. In that context, transparency and confidence-building measures can make an important contribution to the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space. To reduce risks and promote safety in space, we need to increase international cooperation, consultation and coordination mechanisms, as well as standards of responsible behaviour and transparency. To deal with the objective of an outer space free of conflict, a political commitment, to be potentially negotiated within the United Nations, could establish, among other measures, a notification mechanism of operations that could endanger security and safety in space.

In conclusion, this year we are starting a new three-year cycle that coincides with the crucial

2020 NPT review cycle. At last year's session of the Commission, willingness to seek compromise was essential to adopting recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Our expectation is that the Commission will successfully conclude the work of the two Working Groups and provide substantial recommendations to the General Assembly on both items on the agenda.

Mr. Mero (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation wishes to congratulate you, Madam Chair, and the Bureau on your well-deserved elections as the Chair and officers of this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). You, Madam, have our confidence and assurance of cooperation. I also wish to express my thanks to the Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for his remarks (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

The United Republic of Tanzania aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/CN '0/PV.369). I wish to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

First, Tanzania recognizes the UNDC as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the conclusion of work and the adoption by consensus of the recommendations on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons during the 2017 session of the UNDC. I therefore wish to underscore the need for the Commission to achieve concrete results on the agenda items for this new cycle, which are: first, the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; and, secondly, transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

Secondly, my delegation wishes to underscore the importance of achieving the total, irreversible and verifiable disarmament of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Tanzania is concerned about the fact that the 2015 Review Conference failed to produce a final document, due to the lack of political will among Member States.

In that regard, Tanzania participated fully in the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, and therefore voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July 2017. My Government is working towards signing and later ratifying the Treaty, according to the laws of the land.

Thirdly, my delegation underscores the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which continues to work with Member States to promote the peaceful use of nuclear-weapon technology and nuclear energy in the world. Through its programmes, the Agency encourages nuclear safety and security standards. In that regard, the United Republic of Tanzania commends and supports its important role in promoting the safe and secure use of nuclear technology.

Fourthly, the United Republic of Tanzania believes in the importance of the use of outer space for peaceful purposes and is deeply concerned about the implications of the arms race, such as the deployment of ballistic-missile systems in space. My delegation therefore calls upon the international community to underline the importance of strictly complying with the relevant disarmament agreements and the existing legal regime concerning the use of outer space.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to urge Member States to overcome their differences and express political will so that recommendations on the two agenda items can be achieved during the UNDC triennial cycle that starts this year.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): Let me join others in congratulating you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of this year's substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. I assure you and the Bureau of Pakistan's full support and cooperation during this year's deliberations.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

The proceedings of the Commission are taking place against a turbulent global landscape. The international security environment is at its most fragile since the end of the Cold War and is fraught with serious challenges. Growing mistrust and rising geopolitical tensions have ushered in a new era of big-Power rivalry.

There has been a quantitative and qualitative increase in the production, acquisition and deployment of armaments worldwide. An insatiable desire for

military domination by a few countries is affecting strategic stability at the global and regional levels. The situation is rendered more difficult by the development and hostile use of cyber and other emerging technologies, including lethal autonomous weapons systems, armed drones and advanced conventional hypersonic systems with global reach.

The lack of progress made by the nuclear-weapon States in fulfilling their legal nuclear-disarmament obligations constitutes the principal reason for the disarmament and non-proliferation landscape not presenting an optimistic picture. The situation has become more serious due to recent developments, most notably the articulation of nuclear ambitions by certain States to outmatch potential adversaries, thus threatening a new nuclear arms race. That is a flagrant violation of the basic principles enshrined at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I), according to which nuclear-weapon States, together with other militarily significant States, have the primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament.

Another key challenge to long-held non-proliferation norms and rules is the granting of discriminatory waivers to some countries based on political and economic considerations. Those special arrangements are not only discriminatory, but they also open up the possibility of the dual use of material intended for peaceful purposes. Nowhere is that practice of undermining security and stability by granting waivers and exemptions more obvious than in South Asia, where one country continues to build its strategic and conventional military capabilities. The ideals of a peaceful and stable region are therefore being trumped by myopic political and economic considerations.

The disruption of strategic stability in South Asia by the induction of nuclear weapons in our neighbourhood fundamentally challenged Pakistan's security. We were left with no option but to follow suit in order to restore strategic stability in the region and deter all forms of aggression.

Despite provocations and threats from within the neighbourhood, Pakistan remains committed to the goal of a peaceful and stable region. Pakistan has presented a number of proposals to keep South Asia free of nuclear weapons and missiles. They include simultaneous accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a regional comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, a zero-tolerance regime in South Asia and the simultaneous application of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards on all nuclear facilities, bilateral agreements for reciprocal inspections and the signing of a non-aggression pact. Unfortunately, none of those proposals elicited a positive response.

Peace and stability in South Asia cannot be achieved without, first, resolving underlying disputes; secondly, agreeing on measures for nuclear and missile restraint; and, thirdly, instituting a conventional forces balance. Our proposal for a strategic restraint regime, based on those three interlocking elements, remains on the table. Our conduct continues to be defined by restraint and responsibility and avoidance of an arms race.

The existing and emerging challenges to global and regional security — and consequently to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament — need to be addressed holistically on the basis of constructive and cooperative multilateralism. For over a decade, Pakistan has been advocating the renewal and rebuilding of international consensus on disarmament issues based on the principle of equal and undiminished security for all. The international consensus that was reached four decades ago through SSOD-I in 1978 has been eroding ever since. Given the complex interplay of adversarial perceptions, strategic interests and divergent approaches, rebuilding consensus will be a challenge — a challenge that the Commission, as a deliberative body with universal membership, is well-equipped to tackle.

Allow me to outline some factors that could lead us to such an agreement: first, recognition of the right to equal security for all States; second, addressing the motives driving States to acquire weapons, including perceived threats from larger military forces, the existence of disputes with more powerful States and discrimination in the application of international norms and laws; third, a renewed commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to achieve nuclear disarmament within a reasonable time frame; fourth, pending total nuclear disarmament, the provision of effective guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, through the conclusion of a universal, legally binding and non-discriminatory treaty in the Conference on Disarmament (CD); fifth, evolving a universal agreement addressing concerns arising from the development and deployment of anti-ballistic-missile systems that are inherently destabilizing; sixth,

bringing the development and use of cyberweapons and lethal autonomous weapon systems under appropriate international regulations and prohibitions; and, seventh, addressing regional security issues through dialogue and diplomacy, including the establishment of a strategic restraint regime in South Asia.

Preventing an arms race in outer space is one of the core issues on the CD's agenda, which has gained increased significance and urgency over the years. The development and deployment of destabilizing weapon systems has direct relevance to the question of the weaponization of outer space and threatens peace and stability at both the global and regional levels. We reiterate our call to strengthen the legal regime to prevent the weaponization of outer space by undertaking negotiations to that effect in the CD.

Some nuclear-weapon States and their allies find it convenient to shift focus away from their failure to comply with their legal disarmament obligations by calling for the start of negotiations for a highly discriminatory and imbalanced treaty — the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Calls by those States for negotiations on that treaty are completely cost-free for them, but carry huge security implications for other States, including Pakistan. Pakistan voted against the non-consensus resolution 71/259. We did not accept the conclusions and recommendations produced by the ill-advised Group of Governmental Experts on the FMCT in 2015.

Pakistan has positioned itself as a mainstream partner in the international non-proliferation regime and the global efforts to strengthen nuclear security and safety. We have instituted a stringent national export-control system and a robust nuclear-security regime at par with the best international standards. Our export controls are fully harmonized with those of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Australia Group. A robust strategic export-control division and an inter-agency oversight board give effect to those measures.

Pakistan accords the highest priority to ensuring a fool-proof safety and security mechanism in the chemical, biological and nuclear areas. Over the years, we have put in place extensive physical protection measures, strong command-and-control structures and effective regulatory regimes.

Pakistan meets the international standards for gaining access to civil nuclear technology to fulfil its growing energy needs in a safe and secure manner in line with the relevant safeguards. Through various actions in diverse areas, we have demonstrated our credentials to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Finally, the challenges faced by the global security architecture, as well as the disarmament agenda and machinery, require a cooperative approach aimed at rebuilding the consensus agreed by all States at SSOD-I. We are encouraged by the successful outcome of the Open-ended Working Group on the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament, mandated with agreeing the agenda and objectives of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). A successful SSOD-IV that is owned and driven by Member States would be an important step towards the revival of the global consensus on general and complete disarmament.

Ms. Bhandari (India): I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 session as we embark upon a new triennial cycle. The Indian delegation is very pleased to see you chair this session, and we assure you of our full support. We appreciate your stewardship of the session, including through the informal consultations held by you in the run-up to the session, which led to the early adoption of the agenda. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, as well as the Chairs of the two Working Groups.

India associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) yesterday (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

India attaches great importance to the Disarmament Commission as the specialized deliberative arm of the disarmament machinery established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The Commission plays a unique role as the only forum with universal membership for in-depth deliberations on relevant disarmament issues. At a time of growing mistrust and rising international tensions, as well as numerous challenges to both the disarmament agenda and the disarmament machinery, the role of the Commission as a platform for dialogue and cooperation assumes even greater significance.

We were extremely pleased when last year, after a hiatus of 18 years, Working Group II of the Disarmament Commission was successful in adopting by consensus

recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. With that notable achievement, the Disarmament Commission clearly demonstrated that it has the ability to build upon its past successes of having adopted useful guidelines and recommendations — a total of 17 to date — and to make a valuable contribution to the disarmament discourse in the discharge of its mandate. That successful outcome has also partly disabused us of the notion that our failure to address substantive disarmament and international security issues is due to a procedural flaw or an inherent inefficiency in the disarmament machinery. Rather, such failure is due to the lack of political will on the part of Member States to invest in multilateral outcomes that would be of enduring value to the entire international community.

At the same time, we were disappointed at not being able to repeat that success last year in the Open-ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We hope that some convergence can be arrived at during this new triennial cycle on the vastly divergent positions. The rift between those who believe that nuclear weapons can be made to vanish by fiat and those who believe that nuclear weapons must be asserted even more vigorously today has only grown wider. We need to bridge that divide through dialogue and a renewed commitment to multilateralism.

For its part, India remains committed to global, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. To that end, India has supported the proposal put forward by NAM for the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention. Without prejudice to the priority attached to nuclear disarmament, India has also supported the commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of the agreed mandate. We have called for a meaningful dialogue among all States possessing nuclear weapons in order to build trust and confidence and to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines. India's draft resolutions in the First Committee on the convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and on reducing nuclear danger reflect that approach.

We begin deliberations this year on a new agenda item — the first in the past 18 years — on outer space, which has been a long-standing agenda item of the Conference on Disarmament going as far back as 1982. That core issue will now be a topic for substantive discussions under the recently established Subsidiary Body 3 of the Conference on Disarmament. The Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, which will meet in Geneva in August, has been mandated to make recommendations on the substantive elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. In Vienna, the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space continues its work on the adoption of guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space, having recently reached consensus on the preamble, as well as nine additional guidelines.

It is therefore important that, as the Disarmament Commission begins work on that new agenda item, we do not duplicate work that is already being done in other forums. It is equally important to address the broad spectrum of space security in a comprehensive and coherent manner. While transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities are important in themselves, we believe that they cannot be a substitute for the conclusion of substantive legal measures to ensure the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which should continue to be a priority for the international community. It is important that Member States be given the incentive to protect their interests by investing in legally binding multilateral instruments rather than by resorting to national measures or interim partial steps that do not fully address the concerns of all actors in space.

India believes that outer space should continue to be an ever-expanding frontier of cooperative endeavour rather than an area of conflict. As a spacefaring nation with wide-ranging interests in outer space activities, we remain opposed to the weaponization of outer space and support collective efforts to strengthen the safety and security of space-based assets.

In conclusion, this year we begin our work on an optimistic note, building upon the successes of the Disarmament Commission last year and the adoption of the objectives and the agenda of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as well as the adoption of a decision in the Conference on Disarmament earlier this year that

led to the establishment of five subsidiary bodies. It is important for the triad of the disarmament machinery to function as a composite whole so that ideas can flow and the progress made in one institution can be leveraged in the others. In pursuit of our collective security in an increasingly interdependent world, we have no alternative other than to strengthen the idea of multilateralism and the institutions that it engenders. In that spirit, India looks forward to engaging constructively in our discussions.

Mr. Romussi (Italy): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Madam Chair, on your chairmanship of this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and by assuring you of my delegation's full support. Our congratulations also go to Mrs. Mills and Mr. Cooreman, Deputy Permanent Representatives of Jamaica and Belgium, respectively, on their elections as the Chairs of Working Groups I and II, respectively.

The 2018 session of the Disarmament Commission takes place at a particularly complex time for the cause of disarmament. The most serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime continues to be the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which we strongly condemn and which are a source of extreme concern. We take note of the recent positive developments on the Korean peninsula and reiterate our expectation for complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization through meaningful negotiations. To that end, it is beneficial to continue to exert maximum pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including through the thorough implementation of the sanctions regime. Cohesion and determination on the part of the international community are essential.

Among our achievements that deserve to be protected is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Italy highly values the Plan of Action and welcomes the confirmation by the International Atomic Energy Agency of Iran's continued compliance with its provisions. We believe that the international community should continue to take every action to ensure that the JCPOA continues to be a success.

At the same time, we are gravely concerned by the fact that chemical weapons are still used intentionally to harm and kill people in Syria and elsewhere. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent attack in Salisbury. We reaffirm our absolute condemnation of the use of such weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, and we fully support international mechanisms designed to prevent their use, verify responsibility and ensure accountability.

We remain fully committed to international efforts to address the humanitarian, socioeconomic and security impacts of conventional weapons. We are committed to the successful outcome of the third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We reiterate our satisfaction at the adoption of the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional disarmament by the Disarmament Commission last year. We hope that that positive result can serve as a source of inspiration to all of us in the efforts that we all should be making to protect and strengthen the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Italy fully shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. Our desire for a safer world for future generations underpins our efforts for effective progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In our view, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, as well as the basis for the further development of nuclear applications for peaceful purposes. We are committed to making progress on all three mutually reinforcing pillars during the current review cycle.

We believe that nuclear disarmament must be pursued step by step and in a verifiable way on the basis of effective measures, in accordance with article VI of the NPT. We also believe that nuclear disarmament requires the involvement of all relevant actors in the context of seeking consensus in a way that promotes international stability.

In terms of concrete and effective measures towards progressive nuclear disarmament, Italy has always been and remains a staunch supporter of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As the 2018 Chair of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, we are focusing our efforts on outreach in order to achieve the prompt signing and

ratification of the CTBT by those States that have not yet signed or ratified it.

Another key priority is the start within the Conference of Disarmament of negotiations on a treaty banning the further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices. To that end, we look forward to the constructive outcome of the work of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group, established by resolution 71/259. Pending the entry into force of such a treaty, we believe that all relevant States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Moreover, we reiterate our support for the convening of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, to be attended by all States of the region on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them, as decided by the 2010 Review Conference.

We are firmly committed to the long-term sustainability, safety and security of the outer space environment. In that respect, we believe that a set of globally shared principles of responsible behaviour in outer space would be the most appropriate response to the sense of urgency stressed by the international community. To that end, a non-legally-binding instrument that covers the substantial aspects of the safety, security and sustainability of outer space activities could be an appropriate approach for the political commitment of nations to the principles of responsible behaviour and the associated transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities (TCBMs).

We very much welcome the establishment of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities in the context of the 2018 session of the UNDC and attach significant relevance to its objective of devising practical recommendations for the implementation of TCBMs in outer space activities. Italy is currently engaged in the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and remains committed to working with all partners to conclude the negotiations on the remaining guidelines by the June 2018 deadline.

Italy also supports developing norms and principles of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, as well as the promotion of confidence-building measures, international cooperation and capacity-building, in order to improve cybersecurity and decrease the risk of disputes among States in this field.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate Italy's full support for the United Nations Disarmament Commission and to wish a fruitful and constructive session forus all.

Ms. Kaburis (Netherlands): Allow me first to congratulate you, Madam, on your assumption of the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and on your personal leadership in moving the UNDC forward. You can count on the full support of the Netherlands as you guide the work of the Commission. We also congratulate the other members of this year's Bureau on their elections.

In addition to associating ourselves with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union (EU), we would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity on the two items on the UNDC agenda.

The Netherlands seeks to keep outer space safe and secure. Our dependency on space is growing, and our vulnerability to emerging space threats is increasing. The current set of international instruments for regulating outer space activities is insufficient. We fully recognize the need for additional international rules and for more immediate measures. In our view, future space arms-control mechanisms should be verifiable and have a monitoring regime.

As a first step, we believe that it is important to increase transparency and confidence-building measures, which are important building blocks that can be used to increase space safety and security. The Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities and the adoption of resolution 68/50, on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, have greatly contributed to efforts in that regard, and the Group's conclusions remain highly relevant today. We believe that we need to further build on those efforts by developing common guidelines, such as establishing standards of responsible behaviour in outer space, as will also be outlined in the statement to be made by the observer of the EU.

Moving on to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, for the Netherlands achieving and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons is an

important foreign policy priority. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is at the heart of our efforts in this area. The NPT contains the only binding rules on nuclear disarmament and sets out solid and verifiable non-proliferation obligations. In combination with its near-universal membership, that makes it the foremost source of global authoritative norms on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

We all know that the implementation of the NPT, the path to Global Zero, is a complicated and difficult process, and today we face several severe challenges. That is why it is so important that we take this opportunity here in New York to look for issues where we can find common ground, where progress is possible despite the difficult circumstances. In doing so, we should not give in to the temptation to make artificial distinctions between disarmament and non-proliferation. As two sides of the same coin, they are mutually reinforcing and, in many cases, conditional upon each other. Many treaties and instruments strengthen both the disarmament and the non-proliferation acquis.

At the same time, we see that international tensions are increasing, as is the nuclear rhetoric between States. These developments are of concern. They compel us to work harder, but also serve as a reminder of the importance of security considerations when pursuing disarmament. The need for preventing a nuclear conflict stood as the basis of the NPT, and it remains so today. The UNDC can contribute to that goal by discussing the role of risk-reduction measures, for example.

In conclusion, the Netherlands looks forward to working with you, Madam Chair, and the Chairs of the Working Groups, at this first session of the UNDC in the new cycle. We once again assure you of the full support of the Netherlands.

The Chair: There are six names remaining on the list of speakers, and we have a little less than 50 minutes before the end of this morning's meeting. If I could encourage the remaining speakers to be as brief as possible, we might be able to conclude the list of speakers in that time. If that is not possible, we will of course continue in the afternoon.

Mr. Jiménez (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Nicaragua is pleased to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to chair the United Nations Disarmament Commission at this year's substantive session, and we wish you every success to that end. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups on their elections.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

Our delegation supports the work done and efforts made in the Disarmament Commission, the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations disarmament machinery, with the aim of submitting concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. The validity and relevance of the Disarmament Commission were demonstrated when, last year, we were able to agree on recommendations on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. During this cycle we hope to agree on recommendations on the goal of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is the priority of our work.

Nicaragua expresses to the international community the importance of continuing to advance towards the goal of total and complete disarmament, whose highest priority continues to be the elimination of nuclear weapons. In that regard, we welcome the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in 2017, to which we are signatories. We call for the signing and ratification of the Treaty for its early entry into force. This international treaty establishes the norm of international law that prohibits the existence, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, including nuclear tests. However, that is only one more step towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, for which many of us long.

In addition, Nicaragua will participate in the United Nations high-level conference to review progress on nuclear disarmament, to be held in New York from 14 to 16 May. We hope to see all States Members of the United Nations participating in the conference. We also welcome the date of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

With regard to nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Nicaragua advocates the full implementation of its provisions. We regret the tendency of some nuclear Powers to continue to modernize nuclear weapons under the pretext of the so-called doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which contravenes the provisions of the legal obligations assumed under the Non-Proliferation

Treaty, in particular article VI, and the agreements reached at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. The nuclear Powers must renew their commitment to fulfilling the provisions of the NPT.

Despite the failure of the ninth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, we believe that this treaty review cycle is an opportune time to achieve positive results. Our country also regrets the breach of the agreement on convening an international conference in 2012 on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We urge the parties to hold the conference as soon as possible.

Nicaragua welcomes the Disarmament Commission's new agenda item and endorses the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (see A/68/189). We believe that outer space is the heritage of humankind and that its use should therefore be for peaceful and civilian purposes, the benefit of which should bring about cooperation among all nations, not only developed countries. That is why our country is committed to, and agrees with, the need for the development and implementation of international transparency and confidence-building measures for the peaceful use of outer space. We support the negotiation of a treaty that bans the arms race in outer space, as proposed by China and the Russian Federation in the Conference on Disarmament. We have declared that Nicaragua and the Russian Federation have committed bilaterally to not being the first to place weapons in space.

Despite being a developing country, Nicaragua expresses its full support for the legitimate right of all States to have equal access to outer space without any discrimination. To that end, we request support in the area of scientific and technological cooperation from countries that have such access.

In conclusion, we have long noted the stagnation in the disarmament machinery. However, we have not been able to resolve the real problem, which is the lack of political will on the part of some States to achieve genuine progress, in particular with regard to nuclear disarmament. The Disarmament Commission provides a good opportunity to achieve concrete results.

Mr. Prieto (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that I take the floor, allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on assuming the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament at this year's substantive session. Through you, Madam, I would also like to extend my greetings to the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat. We would also like to convey our thanks to Ms. Gabriela Martinic, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina, for her outstanding work as Chair of the previous session of the Commission.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

Peru has long supported and promoted disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. It is also party to the international regimes in this area, to which we accord the highest priority. They represent one of the pillars of our foreign policy and demonstrate our true readiness to achieve general and complete disarmament.

In that context, we were among the supporters of the establishment of Latin America and the Caribbean, a very densely populated region, as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, under the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We were one of the first States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, since we believe it to be a key instrument within the international non-proliferation regime. To that regard, we emphasize the importance of its early entry into force. We therefore urge the States listed in annex 2 to sign and/or ratify that instrument.

In addition, Peru reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the full implementation of its three pillars. We also reaffirm the inalienable right of all States to develop research, production and peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination, in accordance with articles I, II, III and IV of the NPT, within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In that context, we were one of the first States to sign the first Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons because we believe that the consequences of the use of such weapons would be catastrophic, transcending national borders, with severe repercussions for human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the world economy, food security and the health of current and future generations. For my country, the Treaty reflects the deep concern over the enormous risks posed by nuclear weapons and the increasing frustration caused by the failure of nuclear-

weapon States to fulfil their commitments to nuclear disarmament under article VI of the NPT.

That agreement is the only viable option for putting nuclear weapons on an equal footing with all other weapons of mass destruction, whose stocks are subject to specific treaties. In that regard, we call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay in order to achieve its early entry into force.

We take part in these negotiations at a time when the international stage has a gloomy outlook owing to the paralysis of the disarmament machinery in its various bodies. For two decades, it has produced no significant results. In recent years, not one nuclear weapon has been physically destroyed under any bilateral or multilateral treaty. On the contrary, nuclear-weapon States have modernization programmes for their arsenals, and the doctrine of nuclear deterrence still underpins their security policies. My country believes that the current situation is unacceptable, which is why we must work with determination to forge a path whose ultimate goal is the establishment of international legal guarantees that strengthen the principle of collective security.

My delegation therefore believes that the Disarmament Commission is the deliberative body mandated to consider a broad range of disarmament issues and develop recommendations in this area. In that context, we reaffirm the urgent need to make progress towards the main goal of general and complete disarmament under strict international control and to achieve the prohibition and complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible way.

Peru recognizes the progress achieved by the Disarmament Commission last year and underscores the importance of its having reached a consensus text in Working Group II, on recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. My delegation is certain that, under your guidance this year, Madam Chair, the Disarmament Commission will manage to elicit even greater political will, flexibility and cooperation from all States.

Peru is a country that possesses no weapons to be placed in outer space. Therefore, its aerospace policy requires that it use its resources for the scientific investigation of outer space for peaceful purposes. Accordingly, we support the inclusion of the topic of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities in the programme of the Disarmament Commission because we advocate the peaceful use of outer space for scientific purposes and for the benefit of all of humankind, which makes it possible to ensure peace, security and development, while maintaining outer space free of any weapons.

Finally, I would like to conclude by reiterating Peru's strong commitment to disarmament and the non-proliferation and control of weapons. We pledge to make every effort to further the work of the Disarmament Commission because we are convinced that the progress achieved here will contribute to strengthening international peace and security.

Mr. Tang (Singapore): At the outset, Madam Chair, Singapore joins others in expressing our congratulations on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We also congratulate the Deputy Permanent Representatives of Jamaica and Belgium on their elections as Chairs of their respective Working Groups.

Singapore aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/CN.10/PV.369). I would now like to add several comments in our national capacity.

Singapore reaffirms the role of the UNDC as the sole specialized deliberative body to consider and make recommendations on various issues in the field of disarmament. The UNDC, which is an open and inclusive body, has previously made significant contributions. We were encouraged that the UNDC managed to reach consensus on a substantive set of recommendations in the field of conventional weapons last year. As we commence a new three-year cycle this year, we encourage all Member States to engage constructively in order to reach another successful outcome.

Singapore remains fully committed to the ultimate goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. We have a responsibility to our future generations and will continue to support efforts to make concrete and meaningful progress, including through the following avenues.

First, we must maintain and strengthen our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which remains the cornerstone of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Mutually reinforcing progress on disarmament

and non-proliferation is essential to strengthening international peace and security. We look forward to the upcoming second session of the NPT Preparatory Committee as a platform for bridging differences and building trust as part of our collective efforts to uphold the legitimacy and relevance of the NPT.

Secondly, we need to strengthen support for nuclear-weapon-free zones, which are pragmatic steps under article VII of the NPT as building blocks to support progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. We encourage efforts to achieve genuine and lasting peace in a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East through open and constructive dialogue involving all the relevant parties. Closer to home, we reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty on South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Singapore will continue to work closely with the nuclear-weapon States to resolve outstanding issues and move towards the collective signing and ratification of the Protocol to the Treaty by the nuclear-weapon States without reservations.

Thirdly, Singapore supports the early entry into force of the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), a significant step that can easily be taken. The established norms on nuclear testing do not obviate the need for a legally binding instrument to ensure that the solidity of these norms is never tested, especially in our fragile security environment. We strongly urge the eight remaining annex 2 states to ratify the CTBT.

We must continue to work on our common goal of establishing a world free of nuclear weapons. Singapore recognizes that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is one example of the drive towards that goal. The adoption of the Treaty and its subsequent signing and ratification by numerous countries have demonstrated the will of the majority of the international community. In our view, what is paramount is for us not to lose sight of the ultimate objective. Meaningful progress will be possible only when all the relevant parties join in the global effort. It is important for the international community to find a realistic and complementary role for the Treaty within the existing global disarmament architecture, anchored by the NPT. Inclusive dialogue, renewed international cooperation and practical measures for irreversible, verifiable and universal nuclear disarmament are essential.

Singapore supports the UNDC's timely deliberations on issues in the field of outer space. Most of the existing treaties on outer space were drafted at a time when outer space had not yet become a domain relevant to a broad spectrum of human activity. Today many essential services are reliant on technologically advanced applications in space, including telecommunications, weather monitoring and global positioning.

Singapore firmly believes that outer space should remain a peaceful global commons. We are committed to the endeavour of preventing an arms race in outer space, which would pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Singapore is committed to working to build consensus on international norms in space, taking into account advancements in space technology and applications. We will continue to support United Nations efforts in working towards an open and inclusive international framework to ensure the long-term sustainability of outer space use and the security of space.

While work towards an international framework is ongoing, including the soon-to-be established Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), further developing transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities will be useful. The natural starting point to build on is the consensus report reached by the 2013 GGE (see A/68/156), which Singapore welcomes. We should also consider and examine the work that has been done by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to operationalize the measures set out in the 2013 GGE report.

We thank Australia and the Secretariat for the non-papers that have been submitted. We look forward to fruitful discussions over the next few weeks to deepen our understanding on relevant issues, as we work towards developing specific recommendations, with the overarching goal of preventing an arms race in outer space.

Singapore assures you, Madam, of our full support and cooperation as we collectively endeavour to lay a solid foundation towards a successful outcome.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission, as well as the other members of the Bureau.

The delegation of Syria associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369).

The world today is living through difficult circumstances and extremely dangerous situations. Many challenges exist, at the top of which is the development and upgrading of existing nuclear arsenals and the threat by nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to use nuclear weapons. Besides that, there is the role played by nuclear weapons in the military and security doctrines and policies of members of NATO and certain nuclear-weapon States. Moreover, terrorism, which we repeatedly have warned about, continues to expand and has become increasingly widespread. It relentlessly causes the deaths of ever more innocent people and widespread destruction. What is of particular concern in that regard is that Governments of certain Member States, some of which are unfortunately permanent members of the Security Council, use terrorism as a political weapon and support terrorist groups that are on the Security Council's list of terrorists and use chemical weapons.

The United States and Britain, the two States depositaries of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), were responsible for the failure of the 2015 Review Conference by insisting on protecting Israel's continuous possession of nuclear weapons and covering up its non-adherence to the Treaty. That is considered a flagrant violation of all NPT provisions and practically demonstrates the nuclear hypocrisy policy of those two nuclear-weapon States.

A number of Western States, primarily France, continue to protect Israel's nuclear programme and contribute to its development, promotion and protection against international accountability. That encourages the Israeli entity to simply challenge the international will, develop its nuclear, chemical and biological arsenal, and refuse to accede to the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention or the Biological Weapons Convention. In that context, my country reiterates its call on Member States to work towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. I would like to recall the initiative we proposed at the end of 2003 during our term as a member of the Security Council, which we continue to urge the Council to adopt. We also request that pressure be exerted on Israel to compel it to join the NPT as a non-nuclear party and to subject all of its nuclear facilities and activities to International Atomic Energy Agency oversight.

My country's Government condemns in the strongest terms the crime of using nuclear weapons. My country joined the Chemical Weapons Convention because we believe in ridding the Middle East region of all weapons of mass destruction, first and foremost chemical weapons, and because we want to prove to the whole world that we are committed to addressing any use of chemical weapons. My country has honoured its commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention despite the harsh and difficult circumstances in which it finds itself. That was confirmed by the Special Coordinator of the United Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (UN-OPCW) Joint Mission, Sigrid Kaag, in her report to the Security Council in June 2014.

The most serious phenomenon today is that States transfer weapons, equipment and ammunition to armed terrorist groups that are on the Security Council's list of terrorists, as well as to other affiliated terrorist groups. What is even more dangerous is that terrorist groups in Syria are still obtaining and preparing toxic chemicals and using them against civilians and soldiers in my country, with the help of well-known intelligence services. Some States continue to support those terrorist groups and encourage them to use toxic chemical substances in order to level fabricated accusations against the Syrian Government, in a cheap attempt to blackmail it in various international forums.

The Syrian Arab Republic has sent more than 130 letters to the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and other counter-terrorism committees. In all of those letters we have expressed our fear about the support that terrorist groups enjoy from certain States by providing them with chemical weapons and then claiming that Syria is using them. We pose the following question: when and where are such States going to provide the armed terrorist groups with nuclear, radioactive and biological materials?

Political will on the part of some States, in particular certain nuclear-weapon States, is absent in the context of the Disarmament Commission, especially pertaining to the recommendations for achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We call upon all States to work on that matter in good faith.

The Disarmament Commission was able to reach consensus at the previous session on the issue of

confidence-building measures related to conventional weapons. That is proof that the Commission is able to make recommendations. With regard to the item on making recommendations that can practically strengthen the implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures pertaining to outer space activities in order to prevent an arms race in outer space, we underscore that outer space is the common heritage of humankind. The Syrian Arab Republic supports all First Committee draft resolutions in that regard. My country supports the Russian-Chinese initiative of the draft treaty presented to the Conference on Disarmament to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat of force or using force against objects in outer space.

In conclusion, I underscore that Member States must shoulder their responsibility to prevent the trafficking of all kinds of weapons, ammunition and related material, whether lethal or not. They must stop smuggling armed men and terrorists across Syria's borders with neighbouring States. We warn that the scourge of terrorism will sooner or later affect the Governments of those States and others that finance terrorism.

A while ago we heard the representative of the French regime say that her country is committed to nuclear non-proliferation. The reality is very different. For example, France in recent years welcomed nuclear-weapon experts from Israel and included them in its own research pertaining to developing nuclear weapons, in flagrant violation of the NPT.

The representative of the French regime is not in a position to level accusations. I should like to remind her that historically her country was more responsible than others for the Israeli nuclear threat because France, unfortunately, provided Israel with the Dimona reactor in the first place, which has been capable of producing nuclear weapons since the 1950s, when nuclear States parties to the NPT did not have nuclear weapons.

France conducted nuclear tests in the Algerian desert, and on Algerian people, at the beginning of the 1960s. Those people were tied by the French to pillars that the French occupation authorities had set up at distances far from the centre of the blast in order to determine the effect of a nuclear explosion on live Algerian human beings. That is a crime against humanity and one of many crimes that successive French regimes committed. We draw the attention of amateurs to this crime — those who talk about things without doing them or who do not understand what they are talking about.

I ask the representative of France to read the book entitled *Les chemins de Damas*, in which its two French authors, Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot, confirmed that Laurent Fabius, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French regime, was involved in the chemical weapons incident in eastern Ghouta, near Damascus, in August 2013. The French regime is involved in providing armed terrorist groups in Syria with information, intelligence and various weapons and ammunition, including toxic chemical agents. We call on the French regime to initiate an investigation into that matter.

Mr. Denktaş (Turkey): We congratulate you, Madam Chair, and assure you and the Bureau of the United Nations Disarmament Commission of our full support during this session.

I wish to start by thanking all delegations in the room for working in the spirit of compromise, which led us to reach agreement last year on the recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. I believe that we owe our gratitude in particular to the Chair of the relevant Working Group for her leadership in steering us towards consensus. We also welcome the fact that we were able to agree on the agenda of this new three-year cycle at an early stage.

Turkey recognizes the important role that the Disarmament Commission is expected to play as the sole specialized deliberative body and subsidiary organ of the General Assembly that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues. The fact that we reached consensus on at least one of the agenda items in the previous cycle gives us hope for restoring the UNDC's essential role within the disarmament machinery. That is particularly important considering the present state of affairs in disarmament and international security.

With regard to our first agenda item, Turkey shares the concerns expressed by others about the possible use of nuclear weapons and is fully committed to our shared goal of the total elimination of such weapons. We attach great importance to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which we see as the centrepiece mechanism of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. As we have stated on many occasions, we will not support any action that would

undermine the NPT. On the contrary, we need to strengthen the NPT regime. We need to leave behind the frustration caused by the failure in 2015, make progress at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference and achieve a meaningful outcome at the Review Conference itself. Together with its partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, Turkey will work at those meetings towards rebuilding trust and an environment propitious for dialogue, which are essential to that end. We will adopt the same approach in this conference room in the weeks ahead.

With regard to the second, and new, agenda item, which we supported, Turkey sees this as a good time in the Disarmament Commission to consider transparency and confidence-building measures for other outer space activities. We will share our views on that in the Working Group in the days ahead, starting from today. But I should at least say that we agree that there is room for advancing towards consensus, as well as a chance in this cycle to repeat last year's success.

Before I conclude, I would like to welcome the new Working Group Chairs. We will support them in the best way we can.

Mr. Chandrtri (Thailand): Allow me first to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2018 substantive session. My delegation has every confidence in your leadership and wishes to assure you of our full support.

The Kingdom of Thailand aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and the Philippines on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/CN.10/PV.369) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, respectively.

Despite decades of disarmament and arms-control efforts, the modernization of weapons and further accumulation of arms continue to threaten people's peace, security, development and fundamental human rights. Thailand is of the view that a reconceptualization of disarmament is needed. We welcome the Secretary-General's ongoing consultations to formulate his disarmament agenda within the current global context. The Member States must be central to that effort.

It is also a great opportunity that today the first session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission's new three-year cycle coincides with ongoing consultations on the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda. As one of the three multilateral disarmament bodies, the Disarmament Commission plays an integral role in guiding global discussions on disarmament. In particular, my delegation welcomes the first-ever inclusion of an item on outer space on the Commission's agenda. We look forward to the debate on that topic. For the Kingdom of Thailand, outer space must be limited to peaceful use.

On the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda item, discussions in the Commission can further contribute to building trust and confidence among all parties. We firmly believe that people must be at the centre of disarmament and non-proliferation and that there is no place for weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. We welcome all efforts towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The historic opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is therefore a momentous step, as it offers a more universally accepted legal pathway for States to give up their nuclear arsenals.

We need to promote our work in disarmament, including within and beyond the Commission, in order to increase collective security and promote inclusiveness in discussions to get us there. In addition to our partnerships with the private sector, civil society, industry and academia, we must also enhance the gender dimension in our work.

The Chair: We have exhausted the list of speakers for the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in the exercise of the right of reply. In that regard, I would like to remind delegations that the number of the interventions in exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting is limited to two. The first intervention should be limited to 10 minutes and the second intervention, if required, to five minutes.

Mr. Ri Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to exercise its right of reply with regard to the remarks made by the representatives of the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France and other countries participating in this meeting.

As was mentioned, an environment of peace and stability is being fostered on the Korean peninsula,

thanks to the magnanimous and proactive measures and efforts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. A further increase in the pressure and sanctions imposed on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as those delegations have just stressed, does not in any way influence our will to safeguard the State and the people from the continued threats of nuclear attack from the United States. The solution lies in the total elimination of the decades-long hostile policy and military nuclear threats of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is the main part of the nuclear issue, not the pressure and sanctions.

The United States and other hostile forces should cease resorting to that hostile policy now. We will do our best to attain permanent peace, stability and security on the Korean peninsula for our generations to come. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea supports global efforts towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world.

As for the statement delivered by the representative of the French delegation, may I remind her that it is the consistent policy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to oppose the research, production, storage and use of all kinds of chemical weapons.

Mr. Leopoldino (Brazil): I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of Austria, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria and my own country, Brazil. As some of the countries that strongly supported the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we felt compelled to respond to incorrect statements about the Treaty that were made by some delegations during the general debate.

Contrary to what has been stated, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is fully compatible with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The preamble to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons characterizes the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The entire structure of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is designed to uphold and advance all obligations enshrined in the NPT through its three pillars.

As to the allegation that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons weakens non-proliferation standards, we would like to recall that the Treaty in fact goes well beyond the obligations the NPT sets forth in this field. While the NPT requires only the adoption of comprehensive safeguards agreements by its non-nuclear-weapon State parties, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons requires that all its State parties, without discrimination, maintain, at a minimum, the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards obligations in force at the time of the Treaty's entry into force, including the additional protocol, without prejudice to any additional relevant instruments that it may adopt in future. The Treaty represents an important, and indeed historic, step towards reaching our joint goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and represents an important element of the implementation of article VI of the NPT.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are compelled to exercise our right of reply in response to what the representative of the United Kingdom said in accusing us of the incident that took place on 4 March in Salisbury, United Kingdom. In particular, we heard that Russia violated the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Charter of the United Nations, employed illegal use of force and was non-compliant with the international standards and the international rule of law. We also heard that there is no explanation other than that the Russian State was responsible. The French delegation stated later on that they shared the conclusion voiced by our United Kingdom colleagues.

We are puzzled by the certainty with which those statements were made. They remain unsubstantiated by any kind of fact. The tenor and categorical nature of what we heard yet again confirms our conclusion that our Western colleagues need no investigation of the incident and that it would seem that what we are talking about here is a preplanned provocation. That is precisely why London continues to refuse to give Russia access to Yulia Skripal, a Russian citizen, which is a violation of basic norms of international law, and excludes any possibility for us to determine what kind of substance was used in the incident.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom is refusing to invoke the mandatory procedures set out in the Chemical Weapons Convention, which exist specifically for this type of incident. I would like to recall that, in line with the Convention, a country that has suspicions with regard to any other State must first approach that State, which is then under an obligation to provide an exhaustive explanation of the incident within a maximum of 10 days. We were ready to do so. But, instead of following the normal approach, the United Kingdom provided us with a completely

unsubstantiated and incomprehensible ultimatum, which we rejected.

At the same time, if the approaching country considers that the explanation is insufficient under the Convention, it has the right to convene an extraordinary session of the governing body of the Organization on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and undertake a series of steps, as outlined in the Convention. However, the United Kingdom, on the basis of "highly likely", decided to ignore all of those procedures and issued its own verdict. Therefore, Russia had to, on its own, request the convening of a special session of the governing body of the OPCW, which will take place in The Hague tomorrow. We hope that such a professional forum will be able to shed light on the issue at hand.

In parallel, and in order to determine the facts, we have prepared specific questions and sent them to the OPCW Technical Secretariat, as well as to our United Kingdom and French colleagues — the latter in particular because we were puzzled by France's involvement, since France had nothing to do with the incident. Given the certainty with which the representative of France joined in with the United Kingdom today, she will already be able to answer the questions that we have at this stage, and the questions that many other delegations in this room likely have, as well. We are especially interested in knowing the following.

What is the basis for the United Kingdom to involve France in the technical investigation into the Salisbury incident, if, as it is our understanding, the OPCW is now investigating it? Were the French specialists present when the biological samples were taken from Sergei and Yulia Skripal? What kind of evidence was transferred to France by the United Kingdom? What is the basis for France to conclude that a chemical-warfare agent — novichok, in British terminology — was used? How did they determine that the agent was Russian in origin?

We have many questions. Unfortunately, no one is in a hurry to provide answers to them. In the meantime, I would like for those present to remember that the victims are Russian nationals. We therefore have every reason to demand a fair investigation into the incident. We will go full throttle for the truth in this regard.

Mr. Power (United Kingdom): I apologize for taking the floor again. I felt it necessary to do so to correct a number of inaccuracies in the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation in exercising his country's right of reply. To that end, I would like to draw particular attention to three points.

First, with regard to the central allegation that there is no investigation into the incident in Salisbury, it is palpably not true, and, for those who have observed the United Kingdom's repeated statements on the issue, it will be quite clear that we are in the process of conducting a criminal investigation into the act in question, in accordance with United Kingdom law, as the Chemical Weapons Convention gives us the right, and in fact the obligation, to do. For those concerned about the observance of the Chemical Weapons Convention, let me just remind representatives that article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention obligates States parties to the Convention to adopt national legislation in order to implement the Convention, which the United Kingdom has done. That legislation is now guiding the investigation into this very serious incident, which, need I remind everyone else, happened on United Kingdom soil. It is therefore within our right and responsibility, as a responsible Member State, to conduct the investigation and report the findings and progress of the investigation to the international community, which is what we have done.

The second point by the Russian Federation is that we made a claim of Russian responsibility, or a high likelihood of Russian responsibility, without providing any evidence. To the contrary, we have provided evidence and are cooperating with the Technical Secretariat of the Organization on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in verifying the testing that we have completed. That process is under way. If the Russians are true to their word, what they should do is wait for the outcome of the testing process and the completion of the investigation, on the basis of information that, frankly, Russia's own Government officials have repeatedly put into the public domain, namely, that they have maintained a programme — the novichok programme — in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, despite the fact that they were supposed to have destroyed the last remnants of their chemical-weapons programme last year.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of our responsibility and the process that the Russian representative referred to, which is covered under article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention, in which he accused the United Kingdom of refusing to comply with a "mandatory" procedure under the Chemical Weapons Convention. This statement is blatantly untrue. Article

IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention does not obligate, in any way, a State party to follow any part of it. But just to clarify the issue, what I will say is that paragraph 1 of article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention states that States parties shall consult and cooperate in the event of any issue, and it gives them the right to choose the means of doing so.

In the case of Salisbury, the United Kingdom has not chosen to activate paragraph 2 of article IX, as we did not consider it to be a serious enough response to what was an illegal use of force on the territory of the United Kingdom. Rather than providing the Russian Federation with, as the Russian representative put it, an "incomprehensible" request, we asked the Russian Federation to provide an explanation as to how a nerve agent that their own scientists had admitted to producing came to be used on the United Kingdom's national territory. Not only was that request refused, but it was also met with derision and scorn by Russian representatives and public media. We therefore took the action in concert with the other allies and Member States that I mentioned earlier to protect our own national security from undeclared Russian intelligence agents carrying out this kind of operation throughout Europe and countries that are allied with us.

Those are the facts of the case. Allow me to say, in conclusion, that it is very clear that, by raising all these smoke screens and completely false and misleading statements, what the Russian Federation is trying to do is to distract from the central point of the Disarmament Commission's work and from the issues that we are here to discuss today, which are about the preservation and the protection of the norms against the proliferation and the use of weapons of mass destruction and the path by which we can cooperate and work together to create a world free of weapons of mass destruction and a safer international environment for all of us.

Rather than taking responsibility for the destructive actions that the Russian Federation is taking, including supporting, inter alia, the Syrian representative, whose frankly ludicrous statements to this body insult the intelligence of most of us in this conference room, the Russian representative is instead choosing to create diversions and foist misinformation upon all of us. I hope that the rest of this body agrees that his approach stands to be corrected.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I was not going to take the floor. I regret that, owing to the insistence of our British colleagues, we are forced today to conduct this meeting as if it were based on the script of a James Bond film or an Agatha Christie novel. However, I must react to two points.

The representative of the United Kingdom unfortunately said things that have no basis in reality, in particular that the representative of the Russian Federation on numerous occasions allegedly confirmed that we conducted and continue to conduct work on the so-called novichok substance and that this is in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. That is absolutely wrong. All our statements from the very beginning have been aimed at demonstrating that we do not possess any of the substances that the British delegation has claimed we have. Furthermore, the destruction of all chemical weapons in Russia was certified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which can be verified.

I am very happy that our British colleagues have at last begun to work on a broader basis than the "highly likely" standard it has invoked, although they still have not forgone it completely, and decided to look through with the rules of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If we proceed on the basis of laws and treaties we will be able to obtain some results, even if that is unlikely.

With regard to chemical substances, the questions we have are for the United Kingdom, because just a few days ago a representative of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down both directly and indirectly confirmed the presence of chemical substances in that Laboratory that have not been declared anywhere within the OPCW framework. At a minimum, we, as members of the OPCW, have not been informed that those substances have been declared. These are the kinds of questions we have to ask the British side.

Lastly, with regard to the demand of the United Kingdom that Russia provide information about the substance, I would repeat once again that a 24-hour ultimatum was made in an incomprehensible manner, which was not based on any rules of the OPCW and in no way complied with established procedures. We, as a sovereign State, and not a colony of the United Kingdom, rejected that ultimatum, and I am certain that we acted legitimately.

We are ready to work in strict compliance with the rules of the OPCW. I can confirm that we very much hope that tomorrow we will have a professional

discussion in The Hague. I would like to believe that all mentions of "highly likely" scenarios will at long last be put aside and that the experts will finally get to work. I also hope that this will bring us a little bit closer to ascertaining the real facts and conducting a genuinely impartial investigation. For the time being, we are completely unsatisfied by the way the United Kingdom has been acting in this case, in which, I note yet again, the victims were Russian nationals. Let us not forget that fact.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): Given the lateness of the hour, I will be brief. I want to use my right of reply to respond to the statement given by the representative of North Korea in exercise of his right of reply. We once again call on North Korea to refrain from actions and inflammatory rhetoric that threaten international peace and stability and to fulfil its international obligations and commitments.

We also call on North Korea to engage in serious talks on denuclearization. While we welcome recent diplomatic overtures from North Korea, pressure on North Korea will continue and increase until concrete actions aimed at denuclearization are taken by North Korea.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to respond to the statement made by the representative of Britain.

Among European States Britain is one of the largest exporters of terrorism and terrorists, especially to my country. Their so-called free media call them jihadists. In addition to plundering our wealth, its abhorrent colonialism brought disaster, destruction, devastation and terrorism to our region. Britain's blind support for the Israeli entity continues to worsen the crises in our region, where British policies are like a poison without antidote.

Britain is leading defamatory campaigns against the Government of my country, at the United Nations and elsewhere. Britain with its foreign policy is no longer a super Power. Its representative must understand that. It has become a follower of another State — a very small one.

I would like to advise the British representative that his Government must allow the people of Scotland to exercise their right to self-determination, leave the Gibraltar colony and settle its worsening problems with the European Union while focusing on its domestic issues. Moreover, it must apologize to the Iraqi people for invading Iraq in 2003 on the basis of a lie about weapons of mass destruction, prosecute Tony Blair and make reparations to the Iraqi people for the destruction in Iraq.

Mr. Power (United Kingdom): I will not detain us for much longer. I wish to make just two quick points.

First, the representative of the Russian Federation stated that it had destroyed all of its chemical weapons and that the process had been verified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (OPCW). That is true only insofar as it extends to its declared chemical weapons programme. The declaration Russia made to the OPCW does not apply to parts of the chemical weapons programme, which, as has become clear, Russia has maintained but has not declared.

Secondly, while the representative of Syria mentioned a number of other unrelated issues, the fact remains that his country's declaration of its own chemical weapons programme has not been verified.

Mr. Ri Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): With regard to ensuring lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, as the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has already clearly stated, the United States should approach the situation with self-control and patience and respect the atmosphere being created to achieve peace on the Korean peninsula. It should not seek to exert maximum pressure, as it is unnecessary.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): What is necessary is for the Government of North Korea to comply with its international obligations and demonstrate concrete actions on the issue of denuclearization. That is what is necessary.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic): I am sorry for taking the floor once again. With regard to the allegations made by the representative of the United Kingdom, we would like to reiterate that deception is one of the main features of its foreign policy. After listening the discussion and statements made by its representative in exercise of the right of reply, I would like to ask the following question: why does the United Kingdom not respond to the questions posed by the delegation of Russia? What does it have to hide? Everyone is asking that simple question. Why does the United Kingdom not wish to involve Russia in the investigation? Why does the United Kingdom not confirm whether or not

it had the material in question? Why does it have the antidote for it? Those questions are very simple ones but its response to them will demonstrate in one way or another whether or not the United Kingdom was involved in the incidents that occurred in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which armed terrorist groups employed chemical substances as weapons.

The Chair: We have heard the last speaker in the exercise of the right of reply. Given the hour and the lack of interpretation, I shall be very brief.

I should like to thank all of the delegations that have taken part in the general exchange of views. I think that it has provided a clearer context for the Working Groups. I would like to make one point. As I mentioned at the opening of the session yesterday (see A/CN.10/PV.369), from last year's outcome of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) we know what is required to achieve success. Let us therefore bear that in mind as we begin the deliberations of the Working Groups. Let us try to seek common ground on the issues before us so that this year's UNDC session begins the new three-year cycle on a positive note. To that end, I assure the Commission that I and my fellow Bureau members will remain available as the Working Group process gets under way. I again thank the two Chairs of the Working Groups for undertaking that important task. I wish them and all delegations success in the Working Group meetings in the weeks ahead.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.